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FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

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at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PAPADATOS (Greece)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 82: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 86: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/45/L.23

1. Mr. ORTIZ (Bolivia), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/45/L.23, entitled "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction", on behalf of the Group of 77 and Japan, said that it was largely based on General Assembly resolution 44/236, adopted in 1989. The draft resolution noted with satisfaction that more than 70 Governments had established national committees to co-ordinate the activities to be carried out as part of the Decade and, inter alia, appealed to the international community for urgent financial contributions to the Trust Fund for the Decade. The draft resolution further confirmed the important role played by the Director-General for Development and International Co-operation in the co-ordination of programmes and emphasized the need for close co-operation between the secretariat of the Decade and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, as well as the importance of public information programmes aimed at raising awareness of disaster prevention among the general public. The sponsors hoped that the resolution would be adopted by consensus since it was a very simple text which should not give rise to any controversy.

Draft resolution A/C.2/45/L.27

2. Mr. MARKS (United States of America) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/45/L.27 entitled "Entrepreneurship", on behalf of the sponsors, and recalled that it had been submitted previously to the the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1990. The draft resolution was inspired by the Declaration on International Economic Co-operation, in particular the Revitalization of the Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries. It should be stressed that the draft resolution was not in any way ideological in nature or exhaustive in intent; the sponsors had no intention of imposing a global plan or proposing a panacea, or was there any question of criticizing the other components of a complex modern social structure. Rather it was intended as a recommendation based on countries' experience. The draft resolution, which was the outcome of lengthy deliberation, confined itself to suggesting that entrepreneurship was one of the factors that could contribute to a better integration of the world economy. Although it was not sufficient in itself, the existence of a flourishing private sector was the indispensable condition for sound economic growth. The draft resolution should be considered in a forward-looking atmosphere rejecting all reference to the past. The sponsors were ready, if necessary, to engage in consultations, to improve the draft resolution and were prepared to consider any constructive and realistic recommendation to that end.

Draft decision A/C.2/45/L.26

3. The CHAIRMAN said that Argentina, Indonesia and Mongolia had joined the sponsors of draft decision A/C.2/45/L.26.

4. Mr. LU Ruishu (China) introduced draft decision A/C.2/45/L.26 entitled "Strengthening technical co-operation among developing countries in food and agriculture", on behalf of the sponsors. He said that the food problem was becoming increasingly acute and malnutrition was growing throughout the world, particularly in developing countries, as a result of many factors, including population growth. Although each country was responsible for taking action to remedy that situation, the co-operation of the international community was essential. Technical co-operation among developing countries played an essential role in the field of food and agriculture and had made it possible to achieve considerable progress in recent years through a number of projects. The General Assembly had accordingly recommended in its resolutionn 43/190 that such co-operation should be strengthened. In its Cairo Declaration in 1989, the World Food Council had also stressed the importance of South-South co-operation in that field. In the same context, UNDP had adopted in July 1989 an umbrella project for the promotion of regional and South-South co-operation in the food and agriculture sector. That thrust must be maintained and strengthened. The draft decision was a procedural text that confined itself to requesting the developed countries and the United Nations system to help the developing countries to strengthen technical co-operation among themselves. The sponsors hoped that the Committee would adopt it by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 82: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued) (A/45/398, A/45/584)

General debate (continued)

5. Mr. MINET (International Labour Organisation) said that the reports recently published by the World Bank, UNDP and the Committee for Development Planning all emphasized the political dimension of the struggle against poverty. As the Bank indicated, it was a question of choosing between the interests of the poor and those of the non-poor. That type of trade-off involved very far-reaching political choices. As ILO had stated in its annual report for 1989, the means of action were well-known. What the current situation called for was a recognition of common interests and a reaffirmation of the political will to take action.

6. The lesson drawn from recent events was that without growth it was very difficult to attack the problems of poverty. However, experience had also shown that growth did not automatically guarantee the attainment of social objectives. Moreover, the prospects for self-reliant and sustained growth must be looked at from a world-wide perspective. The decline in growth rates in most parts of the world and the serious recession ravaging sub-Saharan Africa were very serious set-backs. During the 1980s, the primary emphasis had been on the macro-economic problems of adjustment, external balances and budgetary deficits, which had turned attention away from the social dimensions of development: thus, development policy had been confused with structural adjustment. However, a new stage of poverty had been added to structural poverty: the new poor were all those who had seen their real income or purchasing power disappear or decline and the especially vulnerable groups. That worsening of poverty brought out the close link that existed between economic progress and social progress. In periods of growth, wages and working conditions tended to improve, though without placing a strain weighing on the

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(Mr. Minet, ILO)

economy. In times of recession, however, the low-income groups were generally those which suffered most.

7. Nevertheless, even during the decades of economic expansion, the advantages of growth had barely trickled down to the poorest groups. That was why there had been major efforts towards the end of the 1960s to re-orient development strategies towards job creation and efforts to eradicate poverty. With the launching of the World Employment Programme in 1969, ILO had played a leading role in those efforts. The Committee for Development Planning had requested in its last report that the Programme should be extended on the grounds that it had proved very useful. Its aim was to contribute to the establishment of labour policies as part of comprehensive strategies that turned to advantage their complementarity with other anti-poverty policies.

8. All the specialized agencies of the system were engaged in activities related, either directly or indirectly, to that objective. Their work could therefore benefit from more effective co-operation or indeed co-ordination. Partial analyses were no doubt very useful, but a "federative" approach was essential in order to take full advantage of the current consensus on a strategy for the eradication of poverty. It would suffice to recall that the new international development strategy, one of whose six fundamental aims was a development process which was responsive to social needs and which sought a significant reduction in extreme poverty, also indicated that the work of the United Nations system should be given greater coherence by closer inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination.

9. Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) noted with concern that more than one billion people, or one fifth of the world's population, were living in conditions of extreme poverty, while in developing countries the proportion was one out of every three. Millions of human beings were deprived of the right to life since a great many children died at a very young age owing to lack of care. Forced to eke out a living by searching for leftovers in garbage cans, millions of human beings were deprived of their right to dignity. Forced to strive every moment of every day to meet their basic needs, millions were prevented from developing their intellectual potential and were deprived of their right to freedom. Those violations of human rights cried out all the more for attention when certain parts of the world had an excess of wealth and encouraged overproduction and waste.

10. In such circumstances, before there was any discussion of economic and social development, millions of individuals must first be assured a decent level of subsistence. It must never be forgotten that man was at the centre of all development, as recognized by the Declaration of International Economic Co-operation, adopted by the General Assembly at its eighteenth special session, a primary objective of that declaration being to reverse the escalation of extreme poverty and hunger. In the same vein, the new international development strategy stressed that the 1990s should witness a significant improvement in the human condition in the developing countries.

11. In order to eradicate poverty, its root causes had to be attacked. That approach was being taken by the developing countries, including the Philippines,

(Mr. Guerrero, Philippines)

where recent agrarian reforms enabled a growing number of farmers to own the land they tilled. Peru was moving in the same direction.

12. However, those efforts were hindered by situations beyond the control of the developing countries: deforestation and depletion of natural resources often brought about by the developed countries; inadequate financial assistance; a decline in commodity prices; protectionist measures adopted by the industrialized countries; and highly unfavourable terms of trade. The meagre profits that certain developing countries made in a manner of speaking from international trade were eroded by the demands of servicing an onerous debt burden. In addition, the non-oil-producing developing countries, hard hit by the Gulf crisis, were faced with oil bills they could not pay.

13. The result was that those countries did not have sufficient resources to finance economic development programmes which could create employment opportunities or to set up social service programmes for the most vulnerable groups.

14. While each country bore the primary responsibility for eradicating poverty in its territory without constantly placing the blame for the situation on the heritage of colonialism, the international development strategy had recalled that the struggle against poverty was the shared responsibility of all countries.

15. In his recent report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General also had not failed to mention the importance of concerted international action in fighting the vicious cycle of poverty, population growth and all the problems which overwhelmed the developing countries and threatened to undermine world stability and peace.

16. It was to be hoped that during the current session a consensus would emerge as to the proper measures for addressing the problems of debt, the energy crisis, negative flow of resources, international trade, and food and agriculture, all of which contributed to the spread of poverty. Beyond consensus, Governments had to demonstrate the will to implement such measures.

17. Mr. ZHANG Yesyu (China) said that, unfortunately, poverty was on the rise, particularly in the least developed countries. By the mid-1980s, one fifth of the world population and one third of the population of the developing countries had been living in conditions of poverty and 600 million individuals had been living in extreme poverty.

18. The deterioration in living standards had been accompanied by a decline in the health conditions and nutritional and educational levels of the poorer sectors of the population, a deterioration which had had an impact on social stability and, in some cases, on the environment. Economic stagnation and recession, population growth, massive capital outflow, reduced export earnings, the increasing debt burden and natural catastrophes were important factors underlying that situation. To deal with poverty, the countries concerned had to spend enormous sums, which they could ill afford, causing them thus to be trapped in a veritable vicious circle.

(Mr. Zhang Yesyu, China)

19. Poverty had become a global issue. The strengthening of international co-operation for the eradication of poverty should therefore be one of the major priorities for the 1990s. To make those efforts a success, the international community had to accept the concept of shared responsibilities. With the relaxation of international tensions, the developing countries could adopt practical measures to help alleviate poverty in developing countries. First and foremost, they should substantially increase the flow of financial resources to those countries; reach as soon as possible the target of providing 0.7 per cent of their gross national product as official development assistance; and alleviate the debt burden of the most poverty-stricken countries. Commodity prices should be stabilized in order to increase the incomes of the developing countries. Finally, multilateral institutions, in particular the international financial institutions, should play a more active role in eradicating poverty.

20. For their part, the developing countries needed to pursue development strategies and poverty-alleviation policies which were suited to their specific situations. They had to increase productivity; take steps towards an equitable distribution of whatever small resources they had; and pay attention to the potential of human resources so that people from all walks of life could take an active part in the development process. Finally, population growth planning was vital to the success of the entire undertaking.

21. China had for many years been committed to alleviating poverty and had had great success in that field. At the same time, the per capita income in his country was still very low and the individuals living in the many pockets of poverty urgently needed help and support. The Chinese Government, which had just adopted an anti-poverty programme for the 1990s, would continue to make use of foreign assistance for the purpose of alleviating poverty. It was clear that, if handled properly, the alleviation of poverty in China would contribute in great measure to the eradication of poverty in the world.

22. Mr. HUSSEIN (Malaysia) said that it was only at the beginning of the 1970s, with the failure of the trickle-down theory, that Malaysia had begun to consider seriously the problem of poverty and income inequality. Since that time, it had based its efforts on resource redistribution through growth, which had yielded significant results. The poor had represented about 60 per cent of the population in 1970; that group had accounted for no more than 16 per cent in 1989. Those achievements were due to various factors, including action by public authorities and an increased productivity in the modern sector of the economy and in agriculture. Thus, the Government had encouraged the development of small farming and had absorbed the poorest rural households into the modern sector, by transferring the available labour into industry and the service sector. Finally, it had improved the access of the most disadvantaged population groups to basic services such as sanitation, public health, education and housing. Within the framework of its long-term strategy, Malaysia would continue to consolidate the mechanisms for diversifying the income base and improving the standard of living for the most poverty-stricken. It would also make greater efforts to develop human resources with a view to eliminating poverty.

(Mr. Hussein, Malaysia)

23. Malaysian's experience demonstrated that economic growth was an inseparable element of poverty alleviation. To achieve it, more concerted efforts should be directed towards identifying the neglected areas and poorest households so as to ensure that they benefited more directly from programmes of assistance. The provision of access to educational facilities, health and nutritional care called for better co-ordination and intervention on the part of the relevant government agencies. The administrative mechanisms of poverty eradication programmes needed to be streamlined to be more responsive to particular local problems and priorities. At the same time, greater attention should be paid to macro-economic management. Lastly, human resources must be developed and more serious attention should be paid to the human dimension of development. Thus a multi-pronged and co-ordinated approach was necessary.

24. To deal with the prevalence of absolute poverty, which jeopardized peace and stability, the international community should, as a matter of urgency take courageous and resolute initiatives. International organizations and Governments should co-ordinate their efforts, define their objectives and establish deadlines for achieving them. Finally, the developing countries should make greater collaborative efforts to devise methods and mechanisms to achieve a fair redistribution of incomes and resources.

25. Mr. LOOS (World Bank) underlined the importance of the measures to be taken to promote growth, both in the developed and in the developing countries, and to stem the surge of poverty, which was the ultimate challenge of development policy. Positive elements, such as the relaxation of East-West tensions, had emerged which could turn the 1990s into years of better growth than the 1980s. However, the ghost of endemic global poverty would continue to haunt the entire international community. Throughout the 1990s, success in reducing poverty should be the principal measure of global economic progress. The problem was one of considerable magnitude, one that prevented a billion people from having even minimally acceptable standards of living. In addition, since the world had become a global village, poverty in the poorest countries was also a threat to the well-being and stability of people in industrialized societies.

26. There were enormous disparities between the developed and the developing countries, with regard, in particular, to nutritional levels, life expectancy, energy consumption and school enrolment. Even more worrying was the fact that poverty was concentrated in certain regions: Latin America, where living standards had fallen below those of the 1970s; and South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa which were the two regions which suffered the most. Child mortality in Southern Asia exceeded 170 deaths per thousand, compared with fewer than 10 in Sweden, and life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa was 50 years, compared with 80 in Japan. Given Africa's rapidly rising population, the number of the poor would continue to increase, even if economic growth accelerated. It was there that poverty reduction faced its greatest challenge.

27. The challenge of poverty was an economic, political and social one, hence its close relationship to development. Economic growth was the cornerstone of action to reduce poverty. The pre-condition for restoring growth in many countries was

(Mr. Loos, World Bank)

structural adjustment. Economic imbalances had to be reduced, since it was the poor who suffered most from distortions and misconceived economic policies.

28. While certain developing countries, such as India, China and Indonesia, had made great strides towards eliminating poverty, most continued to survive in extremely precarious circumstances. The World Development Report 1990 set out a clear strategy to help countries to deal with the problem of poverty. Its premise was that the most abundant asset of poor countries was their labour force. It was now generally recognized that the development of a country's human resources was essential to its prosperity and growth. Thus, the strategy was to generate better income-earning opportunities for labour and to increase the capacity of the poor to respond to such opportunities, by improving their access to social services. As an illustration of the potential of that approach, Indonesia had reduced the proportion of its population living in poverty from almost 60 per cent to less than 20 per cent, in less than one generation.

29. Where both parts of the strategy had been implemented - the first part encouraging broad-based economic growth and the second proposing improved access to education and health and other social services so that the poor could benefit from the new income-earning opportunities - the poor had participated fully in the benefits of economic growth and had contributed to it. Stimulating growth and helping the poor were thus mutually reinforcing objectives. While millions of poor people could benefit from such a strategy, additional measures were necessary to help the more vulnerable groups, such as a system of transfers and social safety nets.

30. The World Bank attached great importance to poverty alleviation, taking the view that providing people with improved access to education, health and nutrition was the best way to eliminate the scourge. Family planning was important in that connection, because the rapid rise in the population was a serious threat to development and accelerated the tempo of mounting world poverty. The Bank was rapidly increasing its lending for basic health care, family planning, nutrition and primary education. Its special focus on women in development sought to expand economic opportunities for them, while attempting to ease their onerous problems of securing food, water and health services. In those efforts, the Bank was encouraging the participation and involvement of communities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

31. Any poverty reduction strategy was sustainable only if it respected the natural environment. The two goals were interdependent. Poverty was a major cause of environmental degradation, and programmes that helped to reduce poverty were effective means of environmental protection. The World Bank would pursue both objectives simultaneously, by encouraging ecologically sound development models. The World Development Report 1990 indicated that the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy could reduce the number of the poor in the developing countries by about one third by the end of the century. That was achievable, but Governments must demonstrate the necessary commitment and make more effective use of their scarce resources. The co-operation of the industrial countries was also required; in particular, increased flows of official development assistance were essential.

(Mr. Loos, World Bank)

If the members of NATO cut their military expenditures by 10 per cent, they could double their development assistance. The developing countries could also reduce their military expenditures; that would significantly increase the resources available to address the poverty problem.

32. Mr. OUALI (Burkina Faso) said that poverty was one of the major challenges of the end of the second millenium and that the rate at which it was spreading was accelerating. Poverty was essentially a political problem. Since human knowledge made it possible to produce enough to feed, clothe, care for and educate all human beings, the persistence of that scourge could be explained only by a lack of political will to take up the challenge.

33. Poverty was principally a manifestation of inequality on a global scale. The disparity between rich and poor nations continued to widen, with the industrial countries becoming ever richer and the developing countries sinking ever further into poverty, as a result of the unequal trade characteristic of international economic relations. Poverty would spread still further if the prices of raw materials were not raised and if external debt, structural adjustment programmes and negative transfers of resources continued to prevent the developing countries from revitalizing their growth.

34. But poverty was also a manifestation of the inequality within a society. It was the symptom of a deep-seated social sickness, caused by the wrongful distribution of national wealth. Very often the destitution of some was no more than the consequence of the scandalous enrichment of a minority. The developing countries bore a large share of the responsibility for the ruinous conditions in which their peoples lived. That situation had its origins in the corruption of the elite and the embezzlement of public funds. The irresponsibility displayed by certain nationals of indebted countries in making massive exports of capital was unacceptable because those credits could be used to finance development projects. Some industrialized countries had been made accessories to such crimes by financial and banking legislation which encouraged that type of fraud.

35. Poverty was also a disaster at the economic level. In order merely to survive, the poor in developing countries were reduced to exhausting their already shallow soil, overgrazing their fields and clearing their forests and, when nature had nothing more to offer them, they moved elsewhere and renewed their assaults on the environment. The relationship between poverty and the environment was therefore a real one and should be given continued attention by the world community. In addition to its assault on the environment, poverty dealt a severe blow to production and therefore to development, as it rendered productive forces incapable of contributing effectively to economic life.

36. The international community should intervene to halt the brutal exploitation of the poor countries by the rich countries and of the poor in the poor countries by the rich in those same countries, if the world was to be saved from imminent disaster. For the moment, everything was still possible. The rural poor of the developing countries were regrouping and organizing themselves into co-operatives - in a sort of "silent revolution" - in order to survive periods of harvest failure

(Mr. Quali, Burkina Faso)

resulting from drought, floods or locust infestations. It was essential that the international community should give its active support to those efforts.

37. Happily, there were ways of combating poverty. His Government was aware that the scourge of poverty would only be overcome when the poor themselves took charge of their own destiny. It had therefore undertaken to improve the living conditions of its population through actions aimed at ensuring the supply of drinking water, promoting self-sufficiency in food and setting up health centres, particularly for maternal and child care. It had also initiated an agrarian reform programme which assigned ownership of all land to the State, in order to protect the rural poor. It had adopted educational measures which had doubled the level of school attendance. The Government had set up revolutionary people's tribunals, to eliminate one of the main causes of poverty: corruption and the embezzlement of public funds.

38. In the World Development Report 1990, the World Bank proposed a two-pronged strategy for the reduction of poverty: the sound utilization of the labour force of the poor, and access to basic services. That suggestion created other difficulties, however, because many poor people did not have the strength to work and their countries lacked the resources to set up the necessary basic services. In those conditions, the only viable way of overcoming poverty was to revitalize growth in the developing countries through true international economic co-operation.

39. Mr. KRAMER (Canada) said that the existence of vast numbers of poor in the developing countries represented the failure by the modern world to maximize the human and economic potential of those countries. There had always been a tendency to consider poverty in financial and economic terms, but the Human Development Report 1990 stressed that it should also be viewed in human terms.

40. Economic growth did not necessarily lead to the reduction of poverty. While it might be a necessary condition for sustained poverty reduction, it was by no means sufficient.

41. The problem of poverty could only be addressed effectively and its incidence reduced in the long term if the productivity of the poor was increased. Integrating the poor into the economic process would diminish their number and help to create a stronger and more dynamic economy. There were three obstacles to be overcome: an inappropriate policy framework, including economic policies which discriminated against the poor; human capital constraints, whereby the poor were handicapped by their lack of basic education; and financial constraints, which meant that the poor had no access to credit or to other factors of production. The first obstacle was perhaps the most serious. To overcome it, the Governments of developing countries must incorporate into their economic reform programmes policies which would promote development and reduce poverty. They could, for example, give particular attention to the agricultural sector, thereby directly and indirectly reducing rural poverty. They could also devise policies which favoured the use of manual labour in the industrial sector, thereby reducing urban poverty. They should use all the opportunities provided by the adjustment process to adopt policies which would increase economic efficiency and attack poverty.

(Mr. Kramer, Canada)

42. For their part, the industrial countries should pursue sound economic policies in order to create an international environment more conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty in the developing world. To that end they could also adopt non-protectionist measures.

43. Policies to combat poverty could vary from country to country but should all be aimed at improving basic health and education services, particularly in the rural sectors, and at improving technology and services to small-scale entrepreneurs, including women. In many countries, economic growth was impeded by the lack of credit facilities for the poor.

44. The World Development Report 1990 suggested that a small internal transfer of funds within developing countries would go a long way towards reducing poverty. For example, resources earmarked for non-productive military spending could be diverted to social programmes.

45. Some bilateral donors were placing direct investments in projects or programmes aimed directly at reducing poverty, but it was sometimes difficult to ensure that the poor were the true beneficiaries of those initiatives.

46. The multilateral development banks, particularly the World Bank, should promote adjustment measures oriented towards combating poverty. Those measures should include: focusing health and education expenditure on basic services and improving the availability of credit to small-scale entrepreneurs, including women.

47. A welcome development was the adoption by those banks of poverty reduction as a criterion in their lending policies. The International Development Association (IDA) linked the allocation of its resources to a commitment to poverty reduction.

48. In conclusion, he reiterated that Governments had a critical role to play in the struggle against poverty but that they did not bear the sole responsibility. The public sector, non-governmental organizations, co-operatives and even individuals should be allowed to participate in that process. The public sector, including large, small and micro-enterprises, must be encouraged to become involved, since it was that sector which created employment.

49. Mr. DUTT (India) said that over 1 billion people in developing countries - about one fifth of the world population - lived in conditions of poverty and deprivation. Of that number, around 600 million lived in extreme poverty and misery. More than half of the poor lived in Asia, with around 400 million in China and India alone. Eradicating poverty was the greatest challenge facing the modern world; accordingly, he could not help but be astounded by the indifference of those donor countries that attempted to minimize the problem.

50. Poverty was linked to the question of the environment. Given the current international concern for the environment, it was all the more necessary to acknowledge that poverty had reached a stage where it was beginning to take its toll on the global environment; in developing countries, it was, after all, the biggest polluter. According to World Development Report 1990, published by the

(Mr. Dutt, India)

World Bank, poverty weighed most heavily on the most vulnerable groups, especially women, who, because they were less educated than men, had less access to income-generating employment. Children, particularly girls, also suffered disproportionately from poverty.

51. While developing countries certainly could not eradicate poverty by themselves, they had a major role to play: that of adopting policies that would ensure just and equitable growth and that would be responsive to the needs of the poor. While rapid economic growth was necessary to alleviate poverty, it was not enough. Growth must be accompanied by effective policies specifically designed to reduce poverty. For example, the report of the World Bank recommended a type of economic growth based on the use of labour. India placed special emphasis on labour-intensive, employment-generating projects. It had also built up an infrastructure of social services to help the poor.

52. While developing countries had a major responsibility, the international economic situation - protectionism, worsening terms of trade, declining resource flows, falling commodity prices and so forth - had contributed significantly to exacerbating poverty. The persistence of that situation could only make matters worse. As the Secretary-General observed in his report on the question, aid policies could have an immediate impact on the fight against poverty. However, official development assistance (ODA) transfers had not increased in real terms. Calculated as a percentage of GNP of developed countries, ODA had actually fallen.

53. In an interdependent world, growing poverty was in the interest of no country. It was necessary to strengthen international co-operation in order to banish it forever.

54. Mr. BANDARA (Sri Lanka) said that more than 1 billion people were living in poverty, of whom approximately 600 million lived in abject poverty. Nearly half of the world's poor people were in south Asia. In his country, almost half of the population earned less than $370 a year. That was why the Government of Sri Lanka had undertaken a massive project aimed at alleviating the burden of poverty. The World Bank had agreed to give Sri Lanka a long-term concessionary loan of $85 million for an employment-generating scheme that would help to improve the lives of millions of Sri Lankans living below the poverty line.

55. He emphasized the importance of the documents mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General on the question (A/45/398), namely the Declaration on International Economic Co-operation and the international development strategy. Eradicating poverty, which caused misery, unemployment, and corruption and even degradation of the environment, was one of the most important challenges of the 1990s. It was the shared responsibility of the international community to take urgent action to eliminate that persistent scourge before it created further serious social, economic and environmental problems and became a source of political instability.

56. Prompt action was needed in order to lighten the burden of the poor and conventional economic measures might not always be sufficient. If the trickle-down

(Mr. Bandara, Sri Lanka)

effects of development could not have an immediate impact on poverty, it would be necessary to go beyond conventional methods and to adopt innovative measures such as those provided for in the "Janasaviya" programme in Sri Lanka. Reducing poverty required the active co-operation of the international community.

57. Mr. RONDON (Venezuela) said that his country attached considerable importance to the problem of poverty, which was worsening at an alarming rate.

58. Poverty was the manifestation of the inequality and injustice of an economic and social system. While it was, of course, present in all societies, it was more virulent in the developing countries, which lacked the resources to combat it effectively. The figures were eloquent: over 1 billion poor people in the world, 900 million illiterates, 1,750 million people without safe water, 10 million homeless and 800 million suffering from hunger. Something must be done, and it was the responsibility of each country to ensure that the national wealth was distributed more equitably. However, an extremely poor country could not solve its problem merely by redistributing its practically non-existent wealth. The solution lay mainly in creating the necessary wealth, in other words, in bringing about the growth needed for economic and social development.

59. The answer to the problem was to be found in the international economic structure. The North-South dichotomy pointed to the existence of two worlds, a world of poverty and a world of wealth. Of all the factors hindering the efforts of developing countries to remedy their situation, the unfavourable international environment was the one with the most disturbing consequences, because it hindered any action taken in the area of social welfare (health, food, education, culture, human resource development and infrastructure).

60. In order to achieve regular, progressive economic growth, developing countries needed international co-operation. Eliminating the negative factors that impeded their efforts - falling commodity prices, rising interest rates, protectionism and the foreign debt burden - would make it possible to eradicate the scourge of poverty. There was a clear relationship between poverty, growth, development and the international economic environment.

61. There was also a close relationship between poverty and the environment. In the modern world, poverty was a serious threat to the environment, and developing countries did not have the necessary resources to combat environmental deterioration. That deterioration was a result of poverty; and it was also a source of additional poverty, as in the case of desertification.

62. According to some studies, the amounts spent on weapons would be more than halved by the end of the decade. The money thus released should be used to help the neediest countries, where standards of living kept the inhabitants from leading lives worthy of that name. The resources freed could be used to foster economic growth in the developing countries with a view to greater international justice. The international community, particularly the United Nations system, had an important role to play in channelling international co-operation in that direction.

63. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had completed its discussion of agenda item 82.

AGENDA ITEM 86: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/45/L.18/Rev.1

64. Mr. SALES (Mozambique) asked the Committee secretariat to remove Australia from the list of sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/45/L.18/Rev.1.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
33rd meeting
held on
Tuesday, 6 November 1990
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PAPADATOS (Greece)

later: Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco)
(Vice-Chairman)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 84: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

(a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

(b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

(c) UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

(d) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

(e) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 84: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (A/45/3, A/45/76-E/1990/12 and Add.1, A/45/77-E/1990/10 and Add.1, A/45/584, A/45/598-S/21854, A/45/648; A/44/646)

(a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (A/45/273-E/1990/85 and Corr.1 and Add.1-5, A/45/281-E/1990/66 and Corr.1)

(b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (A/45/347; E/1990/29)

(c) UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (A/45/529; E/1990/29; DP/1990/44)

(d) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (A/45/3; E/1990/28)

(e) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (A/45/3; E/1990/99)

1. Mr. BLANÇA (Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation) urged the Committee, as it discussed operational activities, to bear in mind the difficult economic and social situation facing many developing countries. Given the improvements in the international atmosphere, the international community had a unique opportunity to correct the most flagrant social and economic inequalities and combat poverty.

2. The operational activities of the United Nations system were the practical expression of the collective will of Member States to meet the developing countries' urgent needs. They provided support for national strategies and helped translate international guidelines into concrete development activities, a dual role highlighted in General Assembly resolution 44/211. That resolution also referred specifically to the human dimension of development, the need to eliminate poverty and the importance of popular participation in development. It would now be the Committee's task to formulate guidelines that would enable the system to achieve the objectives set out in the strategies and plans adopted by the international community during the past year.

3. In fact, the preceeding year had been marked by a significant number of important international decisions which would serve as bench-marks for co-operation activities in the coming years. The importance of operational activities had been underscored in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its eighteenth special session, the draft international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade and the World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children.

4. The broad international consensus which had emerged in favour of human development and the achievement of social justice had led to closer co-operation between international institutions, and he hoped that a concerted approach would be adopted also at the country level. Unfortunately, the operational activities of

(Mr. Blanca)

the United Nations system had yet to receive the support they required. Significantly higher levels of core resources must be provided if the unique international and neutral character of United Nations co-operation was to be maintained.

5. Member States were fully entitled to expect qualitative improvements in operational activities in keeping with the exacting standards set by the General Assembly. The 1990 report on operational activities for development (A/45/273 and Corr.1 and Add.1-5) contained detailed information on the numerous steps taken to strengthen co-ordination at the field level, improve collaborative programming, promote greater sharing of the premises, facilitate the provision of multidisciplinary advisory and technical services and increase national programme and project execution.

6. In looking over the vast range of interdependent measures to improve operational activities, it was useful to recall two related fundamental principles: the right of recipient Governments to identify their own priorities and co-ordination arrangements, and the inherent flexibility of operational activities, which derived from the fact that they met many different needs and were carried out under different mandates and local conditions.

7. He had been requested to submit a proposed three-year schedule for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211 by all the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. In addition, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1990/82, had requested him to submit a precise and comprehensive schedule for the implementation of all the provisions of the General Assembly resolution that required action by the United Nations system, concentrating on those activities that, in his view, required priority attention. The requisite information was provided in the addendum to his report. However, given the complexity of the task, including the need to conduct extensive, system-wide consultations and to condense a vast array of data, it had not been possible, as yet, to produce a detailed and definitive schedule. The schedule would therefore require further elaboration. It was therefore proposed that updated information regarding action taken by organizations in the system should be provided at regular intervals. Certain bench-marks had been proposed to facilitate the monitoring of progress in the implementation of key provisions of the resolution.

8. Paragraph 17 (g) of the resolution requested him to conduct a study aimed at developing the concept of a document containing the system's integrated operational response to the national programme framework of recipient countries. That study was contained in addendum 2 to his report and the views thereon of resident co-ordinators, field representatives of United Nations agencies and recipient countries had been sought. All organizations in the system had expressed a desire to engage in collaborative programming. The limits of a narrow sectoral approach had been recognized, and programming by objectives, which required cross-sectoral and inter-agency co-operation, was being more widely used. Such programming must occasionally take regional considerations into account. He was particularly interested in hearing the reactions of Committee members to the ideas and recommendations put forward on that complex and challenging subject.

(Mr. Blanca)

9. An important issue dealt with in resolution 44/211 was the need fully to enable Governments to assume the execution of programmes and projects funded by the United Nations system for development. The responses of resident co-ordinators on that subject were reflected in paragraphs 104-113 of his report and in addendum 5 thereto. It was obvious that substantial efforts to enhance national capacities for execution were still required, with greater attention paid to the supporting role of the field offices of UNDP and other agencies. UNDP Governing Council decision 90/21 was an important step in that regard and would undoubtedly increase national execution of UNDP-supported projects.

10. The question of co-ordination at the country level had remained under review in 1990. The performance of the United Nations system in that area had improved, as noted at the recent joint meeting of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) and ACC. Practical steps had been taken to strengthen the team approach under the leadership of resident co-ordinators. The Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ (OPS)) had played an important role in promoting system-wide co-ordination, and resident co-ordinators had been asked to suggest additional steps that could be taken to strengthen the team approach at the country level, and he expected to be able to report on that matter in 1991. He also acknowledged the positive work undertaken by the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP).

11. Chapter II, section D (paras. 154-206) of his report concerned recommendations on which additional guidance was sought. He drew particular attention to the recommendations on food aid (paras. 184-188), which responded to paragraph 17 (e) of resolution 44/211. Two other important subjects discussed in that section of the report dealt with field representation of the United Nations system (paras. 159-166) and the provision of multidisciplinary technical advice (paras. 170-174). While those issues would be reviewed in greater depth the following year, they might warrant some consideration during the current year.

12. As noted in paragraph 206, the magnitude of the tasks emanating from General Assembly resolution 44/211 meant that he would need both staff support from the organizations of the system and additional extrabudgetary resources. Thus when considering any new activities, delegations might wish to bear the possible budgetary implications of their decisions in mind.

13. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that the many momentous events that had occurred during the past year had improved the prospects for peace, democracy and development during the next decade. Perhaps the most potent development was the growing sense of global community that united the world as it moved into the 1990s. There was also a growing awareness that the real purpose of development was to enlarge people's range of choices. Thus the fact that developing countries had done more to increase adult literacy, reduce infant mortality and lengthen life-spans in 30 years than the industrialized world had achieved in a century served as a reminder that development did in fact work and that funds for international assistance had made a critical difference. However, continued progress required that development priorities be better focused.

(Mr. Draper, UNDP)

14. Those were some of the central messages of the Human Development Report 1990, published by UNDP. The publication was an excellent form of technical co-operation, for it distilled national policy experience and presented it to busy decision-makers in an accessible form.

15. He was pleased to see the emphasis placed in the new draft international development strategy on human resource development and popular participation in development decision-making and he welcomed the statement and comprehensive report presented by the Director-General. At its most recent session, the UNDP Governing Council had approved several decisions concerning policy guidelines which were similar in thrust to General Assembly resolution 44/211. That resolution had called for a multi-sectoral approach to development at the field level, under the leadership of the resident co-ordinator and had reaffirmed the central funding role of UNDP and the leading role of resident co-ordinators in disaster relief and rehabilitation. UNDP had done much to strengthen co-operation at the field level in JCGP.

16. The Governing Council's new emphasis on a programme approach, rather than a project approach, meant that UNDP must focus on building and strengthening national capacities in six key areas: poverty eradication and grass-roots participation, the environment, management development, technical co-operation among developing countries, technology transfers and women in development.

17. In the first area, 55 per cent of programmable resources for the fifth programming cycle had been allocated to the least developed countries, and UNDP had played an important role in the organization of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. UNDP supported grass-roots activities in many least-developed countries, including Benin and Bangladesh. The Partners in Development Programme sought to encourage local non-governmental organizations to support such activities with micro-grants of up to $25,000; that programme currently comprised more than 270 projects in 65 developing countries. Nevertheless, much more needed to be done.

18. In the area of the environment, UNDP was involved in a variety of initiatives to help developing countries manage their natural resources. Together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank, UNDP was involved in the establishment of a $1-billion global environment facility to combat major environmental threats and was helping to launch the operations of the fund established in connection with the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. UNDP was actively involved in preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and was working with other international organizations in the area of tropical forestry. Support totalling $500 million had been provided to environmental programmes and projects in developing countries in Africa and Asia. UNDP experts were assisting with the recycling of precious metals and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in China and exploring ways to halt the pollution of the Black Sea in collaboration with the countries of that region. Despite all those efforts, however, much more needed to be done.

(Mr. Draper, UNDP)

19. In the area of management development, UNDP was active in both the public and private sectors. Since 1989, the UNDP Management Development Programme had dispatched 70 missions to developing countries to help with personnel training and the upgrading of public services. UNDP was also actively involved in the upgrading of management capabilities in Eastern Europe.

20. In the area of technical co-operation among developing countries, the UNDP Special Unit for Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries had organized four meetings during the past year at which developing countries had arranged to trade technical expertise with their neighbours. Much remained to be done to ensure that technical co-operation among developing countries was fully integrated into development activities where appropriate.

21. UNDP was deeply involved in the transfer and adaptation of technology for development. By spraying and other technologies, various dangerous parasites were being eliminated. Blood screening technology was being brought to the developing world to combat the spread of AIDS, weather-forecasting technology was being brought to the water-starved Sahel, and a cheap and simple pump to bring safe water to remote African villages had been installed in thousands. One of the major challenges ahead was that of convincing industrialized countries that transferring environmentally sound technologies to their less developed neighbours at little or no cost was in their own interest.

22. Lastly, UNDP was deeply involved in promoting women's issues in development, feeling strongly that women must be both participants in and beneficiaries of development activities. Through its Division for Women in Development in particular, UNDP screened all major products for gender sensitivity and alerted all staff to the importance of women's issues and involvement. The affiliated fund UNIFEM had improved the lives of tens of thousands of poor women in developing countries by providing them with access to credit, training and technologies.

23. In the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s, it had been stressed that women's involvement in decision-making was essential to develop and maintain safe water supplies. The World Conference on Education For All had had the improvement of female literacy as a key goal. Greater female literacy had great ramifications for the developing world, in that educated women tended to have fewer and healthier children.

24. On the issue of support costs, agreement between UNDP and the United Nations agencies was central to the future partnership of the United Nations development system. UNDP had assiduously consulted with its agency partners to reach an equitable agreement. It was essential to set up a partnership that worked.

25. UNDP had just concluded a successful pledging conference in which the confidence of the member Governments had been underscored by their financial contributions. Funding for core activities for 1991 was estimated at $1.12 billion, a 7 per cent increase over 1990. While that was an impressive increase, it had to be noted that half of it resulted from the declining value of

(Mr. Draper, UNDP)

the dollar, and that it was still below the commitment of an 8 per cent increase set by UNDP's Governing Council in June. Even 8 per cent would allow little scope for increasing service to developing countries, which needed so much help. However, UNDP was studying its own practices to make sure as much as possible of the contributions actually reached the field.

26. Finally, he said that a significant reduction in headquarters administrative and staffing overhead expenses was expected in 1992-1993. The reduction would not impinge on the brand-new recruitment programme, which represented an attempt to get the very brightest and very best staff.

27. Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund) said that in the past two years UNFPA had carried out a number of programming improvements in view of the need for rigorous and effective action in the 1990s. In particular, it had sought to define a comprehensive and focused strategy for population programming based on strategic planning, greater understanding of the socio-cultural context of programmes and more systematic use of monitoring and evaluation.

28. In 1989, the UNDP/UNFPA Governing Council had expressed its confidence by approving the 1990-1991 budget for administrative and programme support services, including new regular posts at headquarters and in the field. Focus in the past few years had been on improvement of UNFPA's own operations. The Fund had stressed the need for a multi-disciplinary longer-term approach in partnership with all concerned. A key element of such an approach was UNFPA's new programming methodology. Following an in-depth review of current activities and future needs, a strategic framework was established for a given country's population programme.

29. Since population programmes could not succeed without strong co-ordination, UNFPA had been focusing on strengthening co-ordination. The Fund's staff had been instructed to synchronize programmes with those of other organizations, and to follow Government planning cycles. Other initiatives during the past two years had included steps towards greater decentralization and delegation of authority, which, unfortunately, would be of limited effect until all other United Nations organizations followed suit. The agency support system was under review, and an arrangement was being defined which would rely more on regional multi-disciplinary teams of technical advisors, as had been recommended by the report of the Expert Group on agency support costs.

30. To commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the start of UNFPA's operations in 1969, the Fund had undertaken a large-scale assessment of population programme experience world wide. The Governing Council had noted with satisfaction in 1989 that population programmes in the past two decades had contributed to increased awareness of population issues, increased access to family planning information and services and lower infant, child and maternal mortality.

31. In order to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues in the context of overall development, 11 July had been designated World Population

(Mrs. Sadik, UNFPA)

Day. A very large number of countries seized the opportunity to promote awareness and formulate population policies. The world population currently stood at around 5.29 billion. According to the most recent United Nations estimates, by the year 2000 the figure would be 6.3 billion, which was higher by 139 million than the projection made in 1984.

32. The fastest growth would come in the least developed and poorest countries. The situation in the African countries was the most alarming, given that the population of sub-Saharan Africa was growing at 3.1 per cent a year, faster than any other region. It would be around 1 billion by 2010 and reach 1.3 billion by 2025. There was reason for some optimism, however, since recent years had seen significant changes in official attitudes to population issues. At the present time, UNFPA was helping all countries in the region with comprehensive multi-sectoral population programmes, and every country included at least some family planning information and services in its maternal and child care programmes.

33. The population in Asia now exceeded 3 billion. While the region as a whole had made substantial progress in lowering fertility rates, the rate in southern and western Asia averaged 2.3 per cent. UNFPA had carried out a study in 1989 to ascertain why the demographic achievements in the region had been less than desired. The resulting recommendations were now being implemented by the countries concerned, UNFPA and the donor community.

34. All Latin American and Caribbean countries now accepted family planning. Here, too, remarkable changes had taken place, as exemplified by the recent strong statement by the President of Peru in favour of family planning. In the Arab States, while fertility and infant and maternal mortality remained high, most countries included family planning as an integral part of maternal and child health care. UNFPA was promoting improvements in the status of women, maternal and child health care and family planning in the region.

35. Despite the many encouraging developments, projections for the coming few decades showed that there would be an aggravation, not only of problems associated with rapid population growth, migration, uneven population distribution, the role and status of women and continuing rapid urbanization, but also of emerging demographic issues such as population aging and the AIDS epidemic.

36. That situation was the background to the UNFPA Report on the Implications for Population Programmes of the Amsterdam Declaration and on Efforts to Develop Further the Analysis of Resource Requirements for International Population Assistance (DP/1990/44). The report stressed the remarkable consensus displayed at the Amsterdam Forum, and underscored the urgent need to increase support for population programmes. It had been estimated that, in 2000, the minimum annual cost of supporting a balanced, comprehensive population programme would be in the order of $US 9 billion - double the present expenditure. In UNFPA alone, programme expenditures and requirements would easily reach $US 500 million by 1994. UNFPA's resources would increase by 10-11 per cent in 1991, to reach $233-235 million.

(Mrs. Sadik, UNFPA)

37. While deeply grateful to all donors for their continued strong support, she said that resources for the vastly increasing population programmes needed to be substantially increased.

38. Given the challenges of the 1990s and that fact that increased population meant increased energy use, resource consumption and environmental stress, it was heartening that a consensus was emerging on the need to give the highest priority to poverty alleviation and to human development. It was also heartening to see the stress placed by many recent international meetings and agreements on the importance of population variables. By the same token, UNFPA was greatly concerned to see that population dimension had been virtually ignored in the preparations for the Conference on Environment and Development.

39. The 1994 International Meeting on Population would provide an occasion to review and prioritize policy and programme options beyond 2000. The shape of the twenty-first century would largely be determined by what was done, or left undone, during the next decade. It was a collective responsibility to take the decisions which would widen rather than narrow the range of choice for those who were to follow.

40. Mr. JOLLY (Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF) said that UNICEF believed that the 1990s held unprecedented potential for human progress and economic development, provided that lessons could be learned from the positive as well as the negative experiences of the 1980s. The operational activities of all parts of the United Nations system had a key role to play in mobilizing support for seizing the opportunities of the 1990s. Governments must give clear leadership, which required clear consensus goals and a practical vision.

41. A number of efforts were under way to help define such goals. There was increasing acceptance of the need to broaden the approach to adjustment to include adequate goals on the human side. UNICEF welcomed the growing consensus that human development and poverty eradication should be a central concern.

42. Experience had shown that, providing that goals were specific and feasible, inexpensive and politically acceptable, they could help promote efficiency, and act as a stimulus to political action and popular mobilization. Despite the economic and social problems of the 1980s, by setting itself specific goals for, inter alia, immunization coverage and oral rehydration therapy, UNICEF had succeeded in dramatically reducing the number of infant and child deaths. The reduction in such deaths in 1990, as a result of those two health measures alone, was estimated at 3.5 million. Immunization coverage had risen from 15-20 per cent in 1980 to the present 75 per cent.

43. The process of formulating common goals and strategies had been significantly advanced by the World Summit for Children, which had endorsed seven major goals: reduction of under-five child mortality rates by one third from 1990 levels or to 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever was the lower; reduction of maternal mortality rates to half of 1990 levels; reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among

(Mr. Jolly, UNICEF)

under-five children by one half of 1990 levels; the achievement of universal access to safe drinking water and to sanitary means of excreta disposal; the achievement of universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary-school-age children; reduction of adult illiteracy to at least half its 1990 level, with emphasis on female literacy; and protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, particularly armed conflicts. Those seven goals were part of a broader list of 22 specific targets, and together with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, represented a comprehensive programme for deep-seated change.

44. The Second Committee also had an important leadership role to play in the implementation of those goals. Achievement of the goals of human development would call not only for increased resources, but also for a change in priorities with respect to their use. Only a small fraction of the resources earmarked for aid was actually used in direct support of human development; for example, only 1.5 per cent of such resources were allocated to family planning and related activities. The industrialized countries which were members of the Committee should therefore commit themselves to finding ways to restructure aid budgets to meet such priority areas as health, water, basic education and nutrition. The necessary additional resources could perhaps be sought in a combination of debt relief measures and also from the savings resulting from reduced military expenditure.

45. General Assembly resolution 44/211 emphasized the centrality of the national government's goals and strategies and the role of the United Nations system in helping to develop and achieve those objectives. That philosophy was at the heart of the "programme approach" and was closely associated with the Fund's approach of "management by objectives". In UNICEF practice, that meant the provision of assistance through a long-term country programme of support to a defined range of national activities. Over 90 per cent of UNICEF resources were directed to or through such country programmes, each prepared by the Fund's country staff with the Government of the country concerned and in close collaboration with the Fund's other United Nations partners. The country programme approach could greatly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of all operational activities of the United Nations system, as well as inter-agency co-operation in support of the country action. The decentralized programme approach was the focus for many of the actions which had been called for by CCSQ (OPS), and due account should be taken of that Committee's recommendations and experience.

46. Mr. NAVAJAS-MOGRO (Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that there was an urgent need to increase, in real terms, resources for the operational activities of the United Nations system. Such resources should be used exclusively for programmes and projects in developing countries. The developing countries should assume full responsibility for the implementation of projects financed by the United Nations system, and should be given greater degree of flexibility in selecting executing agencies. The work carried out so far in the area of operational activities for development had not gone far enough to achieve the economic and social development of the developing countries. Moreover, recent

(Mr. Navajas-Mogro, Bolivia)

events seemed to presage difficult times for the international community, in particular for the developing countries.

47. The impact of the technical assistance provided by the United Nations system to the developing countries in order to promote their self-reliance and national capacities was still limited. Many developing countries continued to depend on international civil servants for the development, monitoring and assessment of their projects and programmes. Moreover, the current trend towards bureaucratization made it difficult to attain the objectives of the international agencies. Similarly, the centralization and lack of co-ordination of the United Nations system in the area of development co-operation was not conducive to an effective solution of the problems of underdevelopment. In some cases, rules and procedures became obstacles to technical co-operation for development.

48. The Group of 77 wished to reiterate the validity and importance of the principles outlined in the consensus of 1970, as well as the need to implement General Assembly resolution 44/211 which underscored the role of UNDP as the central funding mechanism for the United Nations system of technical co-operation, and the need to strengthen co-ordination and to decentralize capacity and authority in the United Nations system with regard to operational activities. In order to achieve those two objectives, the role and responsibilities of resident representatives and resident co-ordinators must be strengthened. The United Nations system of technical co-operation must be better integrated and adapted to national development programmes. The programming cycles of all United Nations agencies should be harmonized with and adapted to the planning periods of government programmes, and the project approach should be replaced by a programme approach. Resolution 44/211 also stressed the need to reorient execution modalities, in order to enable the recipient Governments to exercise their management and co-ordination responsibilities and strengthen their national capacities.

49. Paragraph 33 of that resolution reaffirmed the provision contained in resolution 32/197 concerning the representation of developing countries at the executive management and other central decision-making levels of secretariat structures in the area of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and requested the Director-General to report on the implementation thereof. In implementing resolution 44/211, the relevant agencies of the United Nations system should take account of national programmes as well as the guidelines contained in the Declaration on International Economic Co-operation, the Declaration adopted at the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the World Summit for Children, and the new international development strategy.

50. Mr. NAVARRETE (Chile) expressed deep concern that one of the fundamental principles which had inspired the establishment of UNDP, namely, universality, was not being observed. Some of the new criteria established by the Governing Council of UNDP at its thirty-seventh session had resulted in significantly lower indicative planning figures (IPFs) for the fifth programming cycle for the

(Mr. Navarrete, Chile)

countries of Latin America. That was particularly worrisome since profound economic and social changes were taking place in that region. The task of UNDP was to help developing countries to attain sustainable levels of economic and social progress in keeping with the policies and resources of the respective countries.

51. Universality was one of the basic principles which had inspired multilateral technical co-operation for development within the United Nations. His delegation associated itself with the appeal made by various delegations to the Governing Council to examine the matter in order to return, in the near future, to the principle of universality on the basis of equality and broad participation.

52. As of April 1990, as part of the fourth national programme of technical co-operation for Chile, 51 different projects had been carried out. The principal emphasis had been placed on support for national scientific and technological development and initiatives to decentralize that process through the participation of institutional, human and capital resources from diverse regions of the country. In order to achieve those objectives, priority had been given to support for technological innovation or adaptation for the productive sector, combined scientific and technological research programmes, and professional training programmes. The Government of Chile had just completed a review of the projects for the current cycle, which had confirmed the validity of the objectives and results achieved to date.

53. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 90/34 on the fifth programming cycle, the Governing Council of UNDP indicated that UNDP should focus on building and strengthening national capacity in six specific areas: poverty eradication and grass-roots participation in development; environmental problems and natural resources management; management development; technical co-operation among developing countries; transfer and adaptation of technology for development; and women in development. The programmes which the Government of Chile planned to carry out in the period corresponding to the fifth programming cycle clearly pertained to those areas. Chile was confident that, in co-operation with UNDP, it would be able to carry out a programme of activities which would directly benefit the Chilean population.

54. Technical co-operation among developing countries was the fruit of the experiences gained from the development process in third world countries. The need to eliminate the costly factors of uncertainty and to progress in the search for solutions to problems which all developing countries had encountered at one time or another, made such co-operation essential and developing countries must increasingly resort to it. The Government of Chile firmly supported such activities both from a regional and interregional point of view, and was exploring and implementing ways to accelerate South-South co-operation.

55. Mr. MALONE (Canada) said that the changes in the global political situation lent even greater importance to the new directions in the Organization's operational activities. The report before the Committee (A/45/273 and Add.1-5) stressed the fact that scarce grant resources for development should be channelled

(Mr. Malone, Canada)

to the poorest countries; the United Nations system must concentrate on areas of demonstrated strength or value; and priority must be assigned to strengthening national capacities at all stages of the programme and project cycle. The report also brought out the necessity for greater harmonization of procedures and practices among United Nations development organizations; a more integrated approach to agency programming; and the decentralization of authority and capacity.

56. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation had an important leadership role in co-ordinating the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 44/211. The necessary resources must therefore be made available to him - not through extrabudgetary contributions, but rather directly from the regular budget. The Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational activities) (CCSQ/OPS) was to be commended for building an inter-agency consensus on improving the resident co-ordinator system, even if its proposals did not fully reflect the Canadian appeal to strengthen the co-ordinator's mandate. His delegation also wished to recognize the work of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) in co-ordinating operational policies concerning common premises, the harmonization of procedures and collaborative programming.

57. Decentralization, proposed by the Director-General in the final volume of his report (A/45/273/Add.5), was an interesting concept but must be viewed in the larger context of achieving greater co-ordination of field activities at the country level. His delegation was concerned that the integrated operational response, once a relatively simple idea involving inter-agency collaboration on programming, might be evolving into a bureaucratic and burdensome concept.

58. If properly implemented, the decision on agency support costs could represent one of the most significant changes in the functioning of the United Nations Development Programme since the consensus of 1970. His delegation hoped that the General Assembly would endorse the UNDP Governing Council's decision to shift the focus of agency participation from separate projects towards programme and sectoral policy functions. His delegation also supported the Council's stress on national execution of projects. That, however, should not imply the mere financing of national goods and services, but rather the transfer of external capacities to recipient countries. Moreover, the shift to national execution should not outpace UNDP's ability to provide appropriate support. His delegation commended UNDP for stressing co-operation with the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the participation of women in development. In view of the relationship between population issues, maternal and child health, literacy, the status of women and the environment, UNDP should be included in the plans for closer collaboration between UNFPA and UNICEF.

59. His delegation was particularly interested in the review by the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA) of the World Food Programme governance issues, including the relationship between WFP, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations. The governance of WFP must reflect the fact that it had become the largest-disbursing grant-based

(Mr. Malone, Canada)

organization. His delegation welcomed the participation of the United Nations Secretariat in the review. Increasing the responsibility of Governments, through CFA, for all aspects of the programme would represent an important step. The Executive Director should also be fully accountable to CFA in discharging his managerial responsibilities.

60. Human development must have at its base the survival, protection and development of children. The commitment made at the World Summit for Children had been extraordinary. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit must be concretely reflected in the work of the United Nations.

61. Mr. Amaziane (Morocco), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

62. Mr. GEBREMEDHIN (Ethiopia) said that his delegation attached particular importance to the three-year schedule for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211. Indeed, in spite of landmark efforts to streamline operational activities, the pace of progress continued to be slowed by the elaborate administrative structure of the United Nations development system. Change had become essential. The focus must be on the needs of developing countries rather than the needs of the United Nations system.

63. In July 1988, during a mid-term review of its fourth UNDP country programme, Ethiopia had engaged in a frank and constructive exchange of views with UNDP officials, with representatives of each specialized agency in attendance and some improvements had been instituted. However, problems remained with respect to the approval of project documents; cumbersome financial and procurement procedures; the auditing of nationally executed projects; reporting requirements; and the provision of technical backstopping by agencies. Indeed, the tasks of satisfying headquarters requirements and reporting to governing bodies continued to undermine the common objective of capacity-building within recipient countries. As a consequence, Ethiopia's fourth cycle indicative planning figure (IPF) might not be fully utilized and would have to be carried forward to the fifth programming cycle.

64. His delegation recognized the importance of the decisions already taken by UNDP and UNFPA in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 44/211 and appreciated UNICEF's long-time responsive, flexible approach in its country offices. It also took note of JCGP's joint letter on harmonization and joint programming addressed to the field offices.

65. His delegation concurred with the proposals to decentralize authority and the country office structure. Decentralization should improve the capacity to provide technical advice to Governments in all phases of projects or programmes, with a view to building the institutional capacity of recipient countries. The decision-making, financial and technical aspects of country office operation must be more uniform. Such uniformity could best be achieved by collaborative exercises at the headquarters level, including the co-ordination of institutional objectives and activities. Decentralization in the country structure would also ensure

(Mr. Gebremedhin, Ethiopia)

similar treatment of Governments and agencies and greater support for national execution. Existing procedures favoured agency execution, even where national capacities had been demonstrated, compelling Governments to scale down projects in proportion to agency grants.

66. Ethiopia had opted for national execution of 35 per cent of its UNDP-funded projects and 40 per cent of UNFPA projects. Indeed, a UNDP-sponsored study had shown that in Government-executed projects, 10 per cent less was spent on personnel than in projects executed by United Nations specialized agencies and expenditures for equipment were higher. Disproportionate agency expenditures on experts were another reason why Ethiopia preferred national execution of programmes. It was not his country's intention to compete with the specialized agencies, but the agencies should bear in mind that their mission in developing countries was not to perpetuate their presence there.

67. The effort to make country offices flexible and more responsive to national objectives must begin at headquarters. Funding agencies must adhere to uniform rules and procedures in respect of their country offices in order to achieve greater co-ordination at the country level. Budgets, personnel policy and expertise could then be adapted to facilitate the tasks of individual country offices. In conclusion, his delegation supported the recommendations contained in paragraphs 155 to 205 of the Director-General's report. Some of those recommendations, i.e., the common understanding of concepts and terms, should not be limited to inter-agency machinery, but rather should include Member States and the United Nations development system as a whole.

68. Mr. HUSLID (Norway) said that the Nordic countries welcomed the new system for operational activities outlined by General Assembly resolution 44/211, which recognized recipient countries as central actors in every phase of the development process. The Director-General would have a crucial co-ordinating role in ensuring that the resolution was fully and properly implemented and the Nordic countries appreciated the schedule he had established to that end. The fact that some governing bodies of United Nations organizations had yet to respond should in no way paralyse the overall initiative.

69. The Nordic countries fully agreed that developing countries should have greater responsibility in planning and implementing United Nations technical assistance. External assistance should focus on building national capacities and should make greater use of national resources and expertise, local NGOs and women's productive capacity.

70. The respective roles and functions of the specialized agencies must be assessed so that their know-how could be used more effectively. The agencies must play a greater supportive role, providing valuable inputs to recipient countries in the formulation of their national and sectoral development strategies. In that connection, the review of the World Food Programme was an important step in ensuring the proper governance of United Nations organizations.

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

71. The Nordic countries supported the initiatives concerning national execution and agency support costs decided by the UNDP Governing Council at its thirty-seventh session. However, putting those decisions into practice would require a great deal of realism. Consultations on those issues must take place in a climate of co-operation and lead to concrete suggestions that would enable the United Nations system to address national development needs more adequately.

72. Referring to national execution, he stressed the importance of implementing administrative procedures and training programmes to improve the capacities of both recipient Governments and United Nations field offices. By no means should national execution be considered a means of transferring administrative responsibility from one United Nations organization to another. Rather, the concept must be geared to each country's capacities and circumstances. National execution must also take into account the tripartite nature of the United Nations development system and define the new roles to be played by its various organizations. Participation by sources outside the system could increase national efficiency and also serve as a model of efficiency to executing agencies of the United Nations.

73. The United Nations system must develop greater flexibility in responding to specific country needs. That would require a significant delegation of authority from headquarters to the country offices. The Nordic countries believed, however, the technical appraisal capacity of headquarters should be strengthened simultaneously with the move towards decentralization.

74. They fully supported the initiative of the JCGP to harmonize United Nations and national programming cycles. The Director-General's proposal concerning a national programme framework, which would form the basis for an integrated programme response by the United Nations system, was interesting. The Nordic countries would appreciate more information on the willingness of developing countries to provide such a framework.

75. The Governments of recipient countries had a key role to play in improving the co-ordination of external assistance. Concrete mechanisms to that end must be elaborated through dialogue between the countries and United Nations organizations. Such dialogue could be stimulated by resident co-ordinators. The role of the co-ordinators must be strengthened and the necessary resources must be provided to them, without creating a new layer of bureaucratic mechanisms in the process.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
34th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 7 November 1990
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PAPADATOS (Greece)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 84: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

(a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued)

(b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (continued)

(c) UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (continued)

(d) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (continued)

(e) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 84: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/45/3, A/45/76 and Add.1-E/1990/12 and Add.1, A/45/77 and Add.1-E/1990/10 and Add.1, A/45/584, A/45/598-S/21854, A/45/646, A/45/648)

(a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued) (A/45/273 and Corr.1 and Add.1-5-E/1990/85 and Corr.1 and Add.1-5, A/45/281 and Corr.1-E/1990/66 and Corr.1)

(b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (continued) (A/45/347; E/1990/29 (Supplement No. 9))

(c) UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (continued) (A/45/529; E/1990/29 (Supplement No. 9); DP/1990/44)

(d) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (continued) (A/45/3; E/1990/28 (Supplement No. 8))

(e) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (continued) (A/45/3; E/1990/99)

1. Miss COURSON (France) said it was regrettable that one year after the adoption of resolution 44/211 by the General Assembly, some of the largest organizations had not yet conveyed their thinking on reforms already undertaken or envisaged in accordance with an established triennial schedule. In that respect her delegation took note of the decision taken by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to study the measures to be adopted for the period 1990-1992. Thus, it was difficult to form an opinion concerning the efforts made in the realms of decentralization and the utilization of national capacities and with regard to the steps taken to adopt a common approach to the programming of the system's activities.

2. It was to be hoped that the organizations would take care to decentralize their programmes as soon as possible on the understanding that at the same time the team-leadership capacity of the resident co-ordinators within the United Nations system at the country level was to be reinforced. The inter-agency agreements intended to strengthen co-operation between the resident co-ordinators and the field representation of the United Nations system at the country level should go into effect as soon as possible. For that purpose, it would be desirable to increase the staff made available to the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation.

3. The utilization of national capacities for the formulation and execution of programmes and projects could not be determined on the basis of a pre-established schedule since it depended on the level of development of the countries and on local conditions. It would therefore have to be decided on a case-by-case basis. If the new approach was to take hold, resident co-ordinators would have to act without delay, in co-operation with the Governments concerned, to take measures to

(Miss Courson, France)

strengthen government bodies as well as local non-governmental organizations. Her delegation fully endorsed the recommendations of the Director-General in that regard.

4. The integrated inputs of the United Nations system should be based on priorities determined by the Governments. If the inputs were seen in terms of programmes and were designed to fit in with national efforts more smoothly, avoiding a proliferation of projects, the results obtained would not be conclusive unless they were based on well-defined and specific national strategies and objectives. Recipient countries would not be able to play a leading role in the realization of their economic and social objectives without coherent assistance from the United Nations system. For that reason, her delegation welcomed the decision taken by UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to co-ordinate their programme cycles and make them compatible with national planning periods. Progress was still required, however, in the rationalization of procedures, which often posed insurmountable problems for recipient countries. The success of assistance for development depended on the simplification of procedures.

5. The overall thrust of the programme of operational activities drawn up by the recipient country and the integrated operational input of the United Nations system should not be too rigidly conceived. An ongoing dialogue, which could take place within the framework of appropriate machinery, should be initiated between a Government and its development partners for the purpose of assessing the programmes in implementation and identifying activities which might benefit from external assistance. All countries, and the least developed countries, in particular, were not, however, in a position to devise such an approach. In assisting them, United Nations bodies, and UNDP in particular, should have recourse primarily to planning instruments such as National Technical Co-operation Assessment and Programmes (NATCAP) and round tables. It was, however, important that the institutions should adapt to the needs of the countries, rather than the other way round. External assistance was no substitute for government accountability.

6. In implementing the measures referred to, United Nations bodies should adapt them to the country concerned and take an innovative approach, avoiding a build-up of new bureaucracies. Her delegation trusted that the report submitted by the Director-General in 1991 would describe the progress made in respect of the whole procedure and in terms of the experience acquired by Governments and executing agents.

7. She closed her statement by expressing the gratification felt by her delegation at the very encouraging results of the negotiations on the fifth programme cycle and at the fact that the UNDP Governing Council had, by earmarking 55 per cent of the resources allocated to country programmes to LDCs, shown its willingness to gear its activities to the poorest countries.

8. Miss HASSAN (Egypt) noted that the entire United Nations system was being called upon to play an important role in the preparations for, organization of and follow-up on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development scheduled for 1992, the International Meeting on Population to be held in 1994, the World Conference on Women planned for 1995 and the World Conference on Human Rights. Those efforts could meet with success only if the Member States displayed the necessary political will not only by adopting resolutions but also by pledging resources. In that connection, she made a number of points on behalf of her delegation.

9. First, the predictability of resource availability would, to a large extent, determine the impact had by the activities undertaken by the system. It would also influence the decisions which the recipient Governments would take, whether in governing bodies or in the field. It was encouraging to see that the resources pledged at the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities amounted to nearly $US 2 billion. However, they corresponded only to recognized activities, while emergency situations required ad hoc measures over and above the normal operational activities of the system.

10. Her delegation agreed with the conclusions reached by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation that the recipient Governments were the ones to decide on their national programme framework, their country statements and whether or not to have recourse to bodies in the system. On the other hand, the system should take responsibility for co-ordination. In that respect, she said her delegation felt strongly about the need to preserve the central role of UNDP in the funding of technical co-operation since it was virtually the backbone of the system's operational activities and was indispensable to their implementation.

11. Finally, she said it was not unrealistic to envisage that political will on the part of Governments could be associated with the efforts made by the system in respect of co-ordination. That had been seen to happen when a funding machinery had been established to assist the developing countries to implement the provisions of the Montreal Protocol relating to Ozone Depletion. It could only be hoped that that attitude would prevail enabling United Nations bodies to face the challenges of the 1990s.

12. Mr. ASRAT (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) reiterated that UNESCO would do its utmost to implement General Assembly resolution 44/211, not only in the formulation, follow-up and evaluation of programmes and projects and their implementation but also above all, in safeguarding the partnership between Governments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the specialized agencies. Although the divergency of views on implementing decision 90/26 of the UNDP Governing Council should be overcome in the months ahead, a number of questions still required further discussion: how the new programme approach was to be organized; whether agencies should be put on the same footing as "subcontracted parties" such as non-governmental organizations and private firms; and whether the concept of standard rates for project implementation functions should be discarded in favour of competitive bidding on a case-by-case basis.

(Mr. Asrat, UNESCO)

13. At its most recent session, the Executive Board of UNESCO had made a number of important decisions concerning operational activities and co-operation with UNDP. It had unreservedly endorsed the principle of a single programme document that contained the integrated operational response of the United Nations system and was based on recipient countries' analyses of their own needs and priorities. It had reiterated its view that the United Nations agencies should be the preferred sources of technical backstopping and that the new support cost arrangements should encourage the agencies to provide such support. It had taken the view that the three-tier system of financing technical services and other support provided by UNESCO might be a viable alternative to current arrangements provided that: (a) sufficient resources were allocated to the new account for technical support services; (b) the frequency and type of intervention expected from UNESCO was foreseen well enough in advance; (c) a significant increase in the amount of the regular budget devoted to support costs was not required; (d) the negotiation and management of the new arrangements did not lead to additional charges against the regular budget; and (e) compensation for the full execution of projects took account of both administrative and technical backstopping requirements.

14. Mr. SUCHMAN (Czechoslovakia) said that, on the threshold of a new United Nations development decade, UNDP, whose central funds and co-ordinating function should be strengthened, must promote strategies and programmes based on the concept of sustainable development and on human development, with a view to enhancing co-operation between developing and developed countries.

15. Amidst sweeping political and economic changes, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were making the transition to a pluralistic political system and a modern market economy. His delegation was pleased to note that, at its thirty-seventh session, the Governing Council of UNDP had underscored the importance of that process. UNDP could play a positive role in helping those countries in such spheres as privatization, reorganization of public administration, retraining of managers and specialists in the field of environmental protection, telecommunications and social policy. His country was not seeking material assistance from UNDP so much as practical advice that might help it make the transition to a market economy.

16. While Czechoslovakia was among those countries entitled to an indicative planning figure (IPF), it wanted to continue to provide technical assistance to developing countries within the framework of its agreement with UNDP, with a view to achieving net contributor status. It was also participating in the implementation of 19 European projects, of which it was co-ordinator for three. Lastly, it hoped to intensify its co-operation with the Inter-Agency Procurement Services Unit.

17. His country was aware of the importance of the work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and, at the recent pledging conference had pledged to contribute more to UNFPA than it had in 1988. At the same time, it commended the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its efforts on behalf of children and its contribution to the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It

(Mr. Suchman, Czechoslovakia)

would be expedient to consider the possibility of extending the mandate of UNICEF to cover children in the developed countries.

18. In conclusion, he reiterated his country's interest not only in European affairs, but also in North-South relations.

19. Mr. MENDEZ (Philippines) said that, as stated in the update of the World Economic Survey, 1990 (E/1990/INF/10), the sense of optimism that had been generated by the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the reduction of tension between the super-Powers had come to be replaced by a great uncertainty about the immediate prospects for the world economy. Suffice it to recall that the world economy would probably record its slowest growth since 1982 and that the overall assessment for 1990 was extremely discouraging.

20. The lessons of 1990 should prompt the international community to face even greater challenges with the determination that had inspired all those who had participated in the formulation of the new international development strategy (A/45/41). The time had come to leave the strategy formulation phase behind and move on to implementation. It was necessary for all nations to play their respective roles in the development process, and United Nations agencies, in particular UNDP and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), should help them to do so.

21. It was in that context that his delegation reaffirmed the significance of General Assembly resolution 44/211, entitled "Comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system". While the United Nations specialized agencies had already contributed much to the development efforts of developing countries, during the 1990s it would be necessary to eliminate all obstacles to the application of certain key concepts in resolution 44/211, since doing so would make it possible to enhance the effectiveness of the system and to obtain the desired results.

22. In his report on the operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/45/273/Add.5), which contained the revised schedule of implementation of resolution 44/211, the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation reaffirmed that host Governments had sole responsibility for designing and managing their overall national development programmes. National capacities would be strengthened if each Government exercised its right to determine its development priorities and the nature of the programmes required, possibly with the help of experts provided by the United Nations system. A country-specific approach was all the more necessary since each country had its own particular needs. Those needs could only be understood after in-depth study, and it was in that area that the assistance of a United Nations consultant might be useful.

23. United Nations consultants could also help a country become aware of the international context. All consultations at the pre-programming stage were of critical importance, since it was vital that the Government of the recipient country should be fully informed in order to plan its overall national programme.

(Mr. Mendez, Philippines)

24. Governments must also take the lead in implementing the programmes. National execution of projects should promote self-reliance, since the ultimate goal of technical assistance should be to eliminate the need for it. In order to make optimum use of national capacities, those capacities must be strengthened, which meant that operational activities should emphasize the human dimension of development. It was necessary to increase the Special Programme Resources earmarked for training in countries in which the delivery rate of nationally executed projects remained low.

25. There was an obvious need for close co-ordination not only between Governments and the United Nations system but also among the relevant United Nations agencies. It was also essential to increase the core resources of UNDP, as the central funding agency for technical co-operation, as well as to respect the principle of neutrality, which could be threatened by the special interests and preferences of donors.

26. As stated in paragraph 26 of the new international development strategy, "the reactivation of development would not take place without an early and durable solution to the problems of external indebtedness". Those problems were not purely financial and United Nations agencies should try to make available to developing countries the new production, management and marketing technologies that would enable them to be competitive. In that regard, it should be added that the debt crisis had been aggravated by the oil shock precipitated by the Gulf crisis, and that the consequences could be disastrous.

27. He thanked once again the United Nations agencies that had helped his country on several recent occasions, particularly after the earthquake in early 1990.

28. Mr. ZUPANJEVAC (Yugoslavia) said that resolution 44/211 was a landmark document because it synthesized the experience accumulated over decades of development co-operation and paved the way for the adjustment of the operational activities of the United Nations system to changing needs and priorities.

29. Not only did the resolution affirm the fundamental principles of operational activities (universality, voluntary nature, neutrality and multilateralism), but it had also developed a complex and integrated set of measures designed to strengthen the effectiveness of those activities. It was in that context that the report on operational activities by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation (A/45/273/Add.5) should be viewed. The report contained the revised schedule for implementation of the resolution, and on reading it it was encouraging to observe that United Nations agencies were already making detailed plans for decentralization and that decisions had been taken for the enhancement of national capacities and the harmonization of programming cycles.

30. While the principle of using national capacities was now accepted, in many countries the actual progress made was minimal. Rules and procedures were still too complicated and the necessary human resources were very often lacking. Capacities should therefore be developed at the country level, while at the central

(Mr. Zupanjevac, Yugoslavia)

level the rules and procedures governing all aspects of the project should be simplified, harmonized and adapted.

31. Those reforms, while necessary, would not be possible without adequate resources. It was disappointing to see that in 1989 the amount of official development assistance (ODA) had fallen in real terms by 2 per cent (A/45/273/Add.4). The nominal 7 per cent increase for core activities for UNDP in 1991, as adopted at the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, was also very discouraging because in June 1990 the UNDP Governing Council had set a target of a gross increase of 8 per cent. Those trends were disquieting in view of the net transfer of resources from developing countries, deteriorating terms of trade and the threat of a new world-wide recession. A substantial and real increase in the flow of concessional resources to developing countries was imperative.

32. The consensus which had led to the adoption of the Declaration on Economic Co-operation, the success of negotiations on the new international development strategy and the impressive results of the World Summit for Children and the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries heralded the beginning of a new era in international economic co-operation. The momentum thus created must also be reflected in a marked enhancement of operational activities for development.

33. Mr. DOLSINTSEREN (Mongolia) recalled that 1990 had marked the fortieth anniversary of multilateral technical co-operation for development within the United Nations system. Such co-operation had become a significant element of international relations and permitted the mobilization of voluntary contributions for development.

34. UNDP was at the forefront of technical co-operation, especially in the areas of training of professionals from developing countries, transfer of technology and raising standards of living and education. Incidentally, one of the essential principles of UNDP's activities was and should continue to be universality.

35. The fifth programming cycle which would begin the following year was, of course, very important and he hoped that the growth rate of voluntary contributions envisaged in UNDP Governing Council decision 90/34 would be achieved.

36. One of the most interesting of UNDP's new initiatives was the Management Development Programme, which his delegation fully supported because it sought to strengthen the management capacity of developing countries. Mention should also be made of the publication of the human development report which was essential to devising a truly scientific approach to the problem. It was interesting to note that UNDP was now participating in technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC). Those recent initiatives should be developed in accordance with General Assembly and UNDP Governing Council resolutions and decisions. In other words, the Second Committee should take them into account in its decisions.

(Mr. Dolsintseren, Mongolia)

37. The role of UNDP resident representatives in developing countries should be enhanced but local experts should also be involved more closely in the execution of different assistance projects. Mongolia was an active participant in the work of UNFPA and UNICEF and other multilateral technical assistance agencies. It greatly appreciated UNICEF's decision to expand its co-operation and appoint a permanent representative in Ulan-Bator.

38. Because it was a land-locked country, Mongolia incurred considerable transport costs in exporting its goods and products. Its economic infrastructure was barely developed and climatic conditions very unfavourable. Mongolia was also facing the difficulties inherent in the transition to a market economy, which must take place without affecting social development programmes. Mongolia's external debt should also be taken into account. Its per capita rate of indebtedness was the highest in the world: $7,000, or 70 times the per capita external debt of Brazil. He hoped that the various international organizations would take all those factors into account when considering the question of assistance to Mongolia.

39. Mr. ISAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, like all United Nations activities, operational activities for development should reflect the new economic thinking and should take into particular account General Assembly resolution 44/211, which highlighted the role of the Governments of developing countries in the formulation of plans and priorities and in co-ordination at the national level.

40. In that context, UNDP was, without any doubt, the core agency for the funding and co-ordination of multilateral technical assistance. At its thirty-seventh session, the Governing Council had adopted by consensus a balanced decision on the distribution of funds under the fifth programming cycle. UNDP, UNFPA and the specialized agencies would thus be able to contribute to solving the problems of economic development, environmental protection and rational exploitation of resources and to the development of international co-operation in such areas as science, technology and population. By including an economy in transition in the supplementary criteria to be used in calculating IPFs, UNDP had shown that it was prepared to take account of the processes under way in the international arena, particularly in the countries of Eastern Europe. The sweeping reforms that those countries had embarked on would, without doubt, give fresh impetus to the development of global relations.

41. In the opinion of his delegation, the restructuring of UNDP should have four main objectives: to improve the mechanism for adjusting programmes to the priorities of recipient countries; to strengthen evaluation functions so as to increase the impact of projects on national economies; to strengthen UNDP's co-ordinating role in the framework of United Nations technical assistance; and to extend the responsibilities of UNDP resident representatives for co-ordination in the field.

42. It was extremely important that balanced and orderly relations based on effective inter-agency co-ordination should be established between UNDP and United

(Mr. Isakov, USSR)

Nations organs and agencies. The Soviet Union supported the overall agreement on relations between UNDP and executing agents and felt that the present system for funding support costs should be maintained. It had no objection to the conclusion of individual arrangements with the different organs or agencies.

43. With respect to its own participation in United Nations technical assistance programmes, his Government was currently taking action to solve the problem of the accumulation of resources in roubles.

44. Since most, if not all, current economic problems had an important demographic component, it was only logical that the United Nations should concern itself with population questions. In that context, the action taken by UNFPA to implement the decisions of the 1974 Bucharest Conference and the 1984 Mexico Conference was to be commended. UNFPA had also played a role in the International Forum on Population in the Twenty-First Century, held at Amsterdam, which had adopted an important declaration.

45. The Fund was rightly trying to adopt an approach based on those programmes, to harmonize its programming cycles with those of the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and to establish closer links between its programmes and the social and economic development aims and objectives of each country. It was wise, too, to increase the relative size of its African projects at a time when the international community was doing its best to increase assistance to the African countries, particularly the least developed among them.

46. There was a need to develop international co-operation in the field of demography. A number of meetings on that subject had been held in Moscow on World Population Day, 11 July. The Soviet Union also had a particular interest in manpower training and had already trained 430 specialists from 70 countries. It was studying the possibility of expanding its co-operation with the Fund. Soviet organizations would be participating in the computerized system for the processing of demographic data under a European Economic Community project. The Soviet Union was also keenly interested in the joint evaluation of the demographic consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and the formulation of recommendations, and prospects for co-operation were, on the whole, good.

47. The activity of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) deserved particular attention. Its authority on the international scene was increasing with its participation in the solution of the problems of mothers and children and its efforts to mobilize the political will of States on behalf of children. The Soviet Union supported the policy pursued by UNICEF, particularly in organizing the recent World Summit for Children. In his message to participants, Mr. Gorbachev had emphasized the Soviet Union's whole-hearted support for the lofty objectives of the Summit and its firm intention to assume all the commitments embodied in the Declaration and the Plan of Action. The highly complex problems of maternal and child welfare in all countries, particularly the developing countries, could not be resolved unless solutions were found for the world-wide problems of underdevelopment and poverty, environmental degradation, the arms race that was

(Mr. Isakov, USSR)

relentlessly pursued in many countries, and human rights violations. It was precisely that approach which should guide the activities of UNICEF in the 1990s. At the same time, its priorities for the new decade should be set in consultation with other United Nations organs and bodies.

48. The Soviet Union had been one of the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was amending its legislation in the light of that instrument and the documents adopted by the World Summit for Children. Priority would be given to the urgent issues of improving the status of women and maternal and child welfare.

49. Mr. van SCHAIK (Netherlands) thanked the Director-General for submitting a more precise schedule for the implementation of resolution 44/211 in document A/45/273/Add.5.

50. Table 1 related to decentralization, which in his delegation's view was one of the corner-stones of the more effective functioning of the United Nations system. Development assistance could, of course, be based on universal priorities and global themes, but it must above all be tailored to the situation and the particular needs of the recipient countries, which meant leaving room for adapting assistance to local conditions on a continual basis. His delegation was not convinced from the schedule that United Nations organizations were decentralizing their activities as fully and as quickly as possible. Decentralization meant that field offices must have the necessary capacity and resources. In paragraph 16 of its resolution 44/211, the General Assembly had requested the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation to make specific recommendations for improvements and increased effectiveness in line with the objectives of the resolution. His delegation awaited those recommendations with great interest. In paragraph 26 of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the executive heads of the United Nations funding and technical agencies to re-examine their organizational structures and staff deployment in support of the requirements of decentralization to the country offices, with a view in particular to redeploying personnel and effecting economies at headquarters. The schedule did not show clearly how the various organizations would implement that request. His delegation would be interested to know the outcome of the discussions on decentralization in CCSQ(OPS).

51. Regarding table 2 of the revised schedule, he wondered if in future reports the Director-General could provide some figures on the progress made. In connection with table 3, on improvements in programming processes, he welcomed the progressive harmonization of the programme cycles of the United Nations organizations with those of Governments and hoped that the harmonization would be completed by 1992, thanks in particular to the efforts of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy. The suggestion in paragraph 112 (c) of document A/45/273/Add.5 concerning the creation of an easy-to-use manual which would clarify concepts and approaches was very interesting.

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

52. The main report (A/45/273) dealt with one of the principal stumbling blocks in the negotiations on resolution 44/211, namely, the concepts of national programme frameworks and integrated operational response by the United Nations system. The subject was a sensitive one, involving many interests, but the material available was sufficient to take a few first steps, which should be based on the following elements: (a) recipient countries should indicate, possibly through an integrated national programme framework, what their national development priorities were and where the United Nations system could help them; (b) the United Nations system should formulate an integrated operational response to the framework (under the leadership of the resident co-ordinator, in view of the potential input of those United Nations agencies not represented at country level); (c) use should be made of existing mechanisms, such as NaTCAPs, round tables, consultative groups; (d) the United Nations system should decentralize its activities and strengthen its field offices; (e) a flexible approach was necessary, taking into account the needs of each country, but the Director-General and the governing bodies of the United Nations agencies should agree on a set of principles and practical procedures for initiating and monitoring the process.

53. Without wishing to oversimplify the issue, he felt that the time had come to move from reflection to action. The resident co-ordinator could be asked to organize a meeting of all the agencies represented in the field to discuss with the Government concerned the possibility of an integrated response by the United Nations system to the particular needs of the country. The aim was simply to improve the efficiency of operational activities. Too many recipient countries had been complaining of the failure to co-ordinate the work of the different bodies. In order to further decentralization and improve co-ordination structures in the field, the General Assembly might request the organizations in the United Nations system to implement, on a pilot basis, the notion of a United Nations integrated operational response to the national programme of a recipient country, leaving the detailed modalities to that system.

54. Mr. BABBINGTON (Australia) said that his delegation had consistently stressed that the operational activities of the United Nations system should provide assistance in the most effective and efficient way and should concentrate on helping the poorest countries to achieve self-sufficiency. The various bodies should develop operational activities in their fields of expertise where they had a comparative advantage; in other words, the system should do fewer things better.

55. Many recipient countries found it difficult to blend the inputs of the United Nations system with those of bilateral sources. Often United Nations assistance was used to fill gaps in development programmes and was given relatively lower priority in resource allocation. The governing bodies of the United Nations agencies had not always been successful in setting priorities. Australia, which was a substantial donor, sometimes doubted whether United Nations assistance was having the intended impact.

56. There were, nevertheless, some encouraging signs of improvement. Faced with the prospect of reduced growth in official development assistance during the 1990s,

(Mr. Babbington, Australia)

Member States and United Nations agencies had taken several important initiatives to bring greater coherence and focus to development activities. In that regard, resolution 44/211 was a landmark. There was a particular need for better integration and co-ordination of programming of United Nations system co-operation in the field to promote an integrated system response to the national programme framework. No effort should be spared to improve the correlation between national programme frameworks and integrated system response, and the lack of interest among countries was disappointing. Joint programming required well-developed national programming structures, and one of the principal tasks of the United Nations system, especially of UNDP, was to respond to requests for assistance in national development planning and public sector management in general. Co-ordination of various institutional activities in the field called for strengthening of the role of the resident co-ordinator, who should be primarily responsible for ensuring that United Nations country acitivities met the needs of the recipient country. Further administrative decentralization should permit the representatives of specialized agencies in the field to work as a team, since they were usually best acquainted with local needs.

57. National execution was an aspect of resolution 44/211 whose implementation would require great care. Indeed, all technical co-operation should eventually be executed by national bodies, but the capacity of each country must be considered. It must also be in conformity with established principles of accountability for operational activities (para. 24 of the resolution). National execution was important because it opened the door to local and international private organizations and to NGOs. It would be promoted by the new agency support cost arrangement, which eliminated automatic payment of support costs to United Nations agencies and organizations. His delegation welcomed that new decision of the UNDP Governing Council because it increased flexibility in selection of executing agents, and could only help to improve the quality of programmes and projects.

58. An idea which had emerged from the thirty-seventh session of the UNDP Governing Council was that UNDP should identify the areas in which it had been most and least effective and should address three main challenges: poverty alleviation and investment in people; improvement of economic management; and sustainable development.

59. Welcome initiatives had been taken to improve the intergovernmental management of the World Food Programme (WFP). At a time when efforts were being made to enhance the credibility of the multilateral development assistance system, it was essential that the thirtieth session of the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes should be characterized by constructive effort.

60. Mr. KOIKE (Japan) said that resolution 44/211, adopted the previous year by consensus, was a landmark in the history of the concept of operational activities for development, because it established a basic philosophy, principles and guidelines. That resolution was based on the premise that the Government of a recipient country knew best what its development priorities and objectives were. The recipient Government therefore should take responsibility for integrating

(Mr. Koike, Japan)

operational activities of the United Nations system into its own national development plan and for co-ordination of external assistance in such a way as to strengthen and utilize national capacity. In that sense, the resolution was an attempt to help developing countries to attain the goal of self-reliance.

61. His delegation had identified four main objectives: decentralization and delegation of authority and capacity for action to field offices; promotion of national execution; reorientation of the role of technical co-operation agencies from project execution to technical support activities; and a shift from a project approach to a programme approach. Since adoption of the resolution, the UNDP Governing Council had taken a number of important decisions concerning national execution, agency support costs, procurement policies and programme planning. While UNDP had begun the necessary adjustment process, other organizations had not yet done so, perhaps because their governing bodies had not considered the matter. It was imperative that action taken by Governments in the various governing bodies should be perfectly co-ordinated. Since UNDP had particular responsibilities, and since the fifth programming cycle would be beginning in 1992, UNDP and the organizations concerned should consult among themselves and co-ordinate their activities. The Director-General and his staff should continue to play a key role in accelerating the co-ordination process.

62. General Assembly resolution 44/211 and UNDP Governing Council decision 90/21 both dealt with ways to facilitate national execution, but lack of human resources was a constraint. UNDP must make every effort to assist recipient Governments in enhancing policy formation, programme management and project administration. Furthermore, if the integrated system approach was the best way to increase coherence and efficiency of operational activities, a recipient Government also had a responsibility to strengthen co-ordination, for example, by formulating an internally consistent national development programme and ensuring interministerial co-ordination.

63. His delegation had participated actively in negotiations which had led to the adoption by the UNDP Governing Council of decision 90/26 on agency support costs. The new system would bring about changes that might be difficult in the short run, but it offered a solid framework for tripartite co-operation. UNDP should intensify its consultations with the agencies concerned, giving consideration to their own problems, especially the predictability of income during the transition period in particular. After such consultations, specific proposals should be submitted at the special session in February.

64. The fifth programming cycle adopted by the UNDP Governing Council did not satisfy all countries, but Japan supported allocation of resources on a priority basis for poorer countries, including the least developed countries, for alleviation of poverty and for capacity-building by developing countries. It also welcomed the Governing Council's decision, (decision 90/23), to establish a standing committee for programme matters, which would allow UNDP better to meet the needs of recipient countries.

(Mr. Koike, Japan)

65. Since its inception in 196?, the World Food Programme had played an important role in assisting low-income and food-deficit countries. It had extended assistance also to countries afflicted by natural and man-made disasters and had become the largest provider of aid in the United Nations system after the World Bank. Its activities had expanded dramatically, by more than 10 times over the past 27 years, which could not have been imagined when it was established as a small experimental programme under the joint auspices of the United Nations and FAO. WFP was still governed by the general regulations formulated 25 years earlier, which appeared increasingly out-of-date, particularly with regard to relations with FAO. The time had come to review the regulations to reflect the actual relationship between WFP and FAO. WFP should assume responsibility for its own governance, under intergovernmental oversight by the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes, which would lighten the FAO work-load. With greater independence, WFP could play a more active role in co-ordination of programmes conducted with other institutions, such as FAO. The Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes should attempt to resolve that matter quickly, and it was to be hoped that the United Nations and FAO would participate positively in that effort.

66. Mr. ROKOTUIVUNA (Fiji) said that UNDP, which was the corner-stone of United Nations development activities, had a key role to play in the establishment of a new and more balanced economic and social order. It must have strong support for its activities, particularly through financial and material contributions of Member States. The recent United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities had fallen short of the target established, and it was to be hoped that donor countries had not rejected the idea of contributing 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance. Nevertheless, though perhaps a certain "donor fatigue" was setting in, there could be little doubt that the development assistance they had provided had brought about an unprecedented transformation since the end of the Second World War.

67. His delegation welcomed the priority given to consolidation and co-ordination among United Nations agencies. The UNDP resident representative, in his capacity as resident co-ordinator, should be given clear authority to oversee the activities of United Nations bodies to ensure that they were consistent with the objectives and priorities set by Governments. Human resource development had been given high priority in the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations Development Decade. Assistance from the United Nations system for national capacity-building had achieved good results, and it remained a UNDP priority. National execution and technical co-operation between developing countries must also continue to be encouraged.

68. The small island countries of the Pacific subregion, which often felt marginalized and neglected in the face of the compelling needs of the more populous developing countries, highly appreciated the assistance provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Such assistance had enabled Fiji to hold a round-table meeting in 1990, at which it was able to highlight policies focused on the adaptation of the development process to present day realities: export-led growth, deregulation of the economy, cutbacks in public spending, reform of the tax

(Mr. Rokotuivuna, Fiji)

system, the importance of competitiveness in international markets and the involvement of all sectors of the population. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) had all been of vital assistance to Fiji in their respective areas of competence.

69. Mr. REVA (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) noted with satisfaction the wider acceptance of the need for a new approach to multilateral co-operation. The growing interdependence of States, the acceleration of political and economic integration processes, the critical nature of environmental problems and the necessity to ensure the stability and the predictability of international economic relations should be taken into account when restructuring the mechanism of operational activities. Particular importance attached, in that regard, to the General Assembly resolutions and above all to resolution 44/211.

70. His delegation had studied with interest the revised schedule of implementation of resolution 44/211 contained in the Director-General's report (A/45/273/Add.5-E/1990/85/Add.5). That schedule represented an extensive revision of the draft presented at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council. The Director-General's task had been complicated by the transformations under way in the United Nations system - for example, UNDP was preparing its fifth programme cycle and working out the new procedures for organization support costs. Nevertheless, a number of participating bodies had presented detailed decentralization plans and adopted decisions on more vigorous action to utilize national capacities and to accelerate implementation. As the Director-General had said, however, implementation of the resolution was essentially at the preparatory stage. The Ukraine would follow the practical execution of the resolution with the keenest interest.

71. The attainment of the broad objectives of operational activities for development depended to a large extent on the efficiency of UNDP. The foundation for the success of UNDP's activities was the consensus of 1970: voluntary and universal participation, the immediate nature of assistance and the decisive role of the beneficiary countries in using that assistance.

72. The report on the thirty-seventh session of the UNDP Governing Council (Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1990, Supplement No. 9) contained detailed information on the assistance provided by UNDP to the developing countries. His delegation noted with satisfaction that UNDP's activities were geared to the work of the other United Nations agencies and specialized institutions as well as to the results of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation. It was particularly important that UNDP should participate in the adoption of environmental protection measures because the dimensions of environmental degradation necessitated a significant expansion in international, regional and subregional co-operation, particularly in operational activities. For the Ukrainian SSR, a major focus of those operational activities was international co-operation to deal with the consequences of the Chernobyl accident and it was to be hoped that UNDP would play an active role in that co-operation.

(Mr. Reva, Ukrainian SSR)

73. With regard to the full utilization of the resources placed at the disposal of UNDP, reference should be made to decision 85/39 by which the Governing Council had urged UNDP and the executing agencies to increase their efforts to expand the geographical distribution of the sources of supply. The UNDP administration should show greater perseverance and flexibility in that area.

74. The Ukrainian SSR had participated in the work of UNDP since its inception. Its co-operation with the developing countries consisted in training qualified personnel, and more than 20,000 nationals of developing countries were currently undergoing training in the specialized establishments of the Ukrainian SSR.

75. The Ukraine had undertaken a programme of improvement of its economic structures, which would help ensure that every production unit could participate in the multilateral technical assistance offered by the United Nations in the provision of equipment or consultative services to interested developing countries.

76. In conclusion, he called attention to the work of UNICEF, which occupied an increasingly important place in the system of operational activities. The Ukrainian SSR endorsed UNICEF's lofty objectives, as evidenced by its contribution of 1,249,000 rubles for 1989, and it welcomed the personal initiatives undertaken by the Director-General in maternal and child care. It was vital to continue efforts to rationalize the work of UNICEF, to direct resources towards the main goals defined in the documents adopted by the World Summit for Children and to improve the evaluation mechanisms employed in ordinary programmes.

77. Mr. MOHIUDDIN (Bangladesh) said that efforts must now be directed towards the practical implementation of various important international instruments, such as the final declaration of the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly and the new development strategy. The new Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries also established important goals. It was to be hoped that the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) would not overlook that problem at its next session. The Director-General could play an essential role by taking timely initiatives to ensure the coherence, co-ordination and effectiveness that would benefit the developing countries in general and the least developed countries in particular. It should also be noted that paragraph 142 of the new Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries called for the establishment of focal points for the least developed countries in the various United Nations agencies.

78. He stressed that operational activities for development should not suffer from a lack of financing. It was vital to allocate an increasing share of the resources earmarked for those purposes to the activities which deserved them most. He welcomed the decision taken by the Governing Council of UNDP regarding the fifth programming cycle. Other important concerns included execution, co-ordination and decentralization at country level, the simplification of procedures, the harmonization of programming cycles and the integrated approach. Guidance should be sought in the important provisions of resolution 44/211.

(Mr. Mohiuddin, Bangladesh)

79. It was essential to make programmes responsive to national priorities and to ensure that the national executing authorities were fully involved in the planning and execution process. If they were to play their proper role, those authorities must receive the full support of the United Nations system. Paragraphs 14 to 18 of the Director-General's report (A/45/273/Add.2) had particular bearing on that topic. While it was essential to increase dialogue at all levels, Member States should have the time to reflect carefully on the different recommendations set forth in that document before any decision was taken about future activities.

80. Both the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) and the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) had very important roles to play. While co-ordination at field level was of great importance, its impact would be limited without similar co-operation at Headquarters. That task would be greatly facilitated if clearly defined national objectives and priorities were incorporated in the programmes of the United Nations agencies and if emphasis was placed on national execution of projects. The reports submitted by the different agencies on decentralization were of great interest. Efforts must promptly be made to remove all administrative and other constraints, some of which were directly linked to over-centralization.

81. Finally, it was important to ensure that the integrated approach of operational activities at country level did not become too burdensome. It should only be adopted where its usefulness was beyond doubt.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.